

**Nassau County Fire Commission
Financial & Operational Review
Corrective Action Plan**

	RECOMMENDED ACTION	REPORT AUDIT NUMBER	IMPLEMENTATION STATUS
1	<p>The Commission should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pursue legislative authorization to impose fees for all services that it performs, including services provided to other municipalities; • review all fees currently imposed and determine whether the amounts charged are sufficient to recover a reasonable share of the cost of services. Fees should be on a graduated basis, commensurate with the cost of the resources expended. Legislative authorizations should be sought for appropriate amendments to the fee schedules; • pursue authorization for the imposition of a fee for each re-review of a plan necessitated by the submitter's failure to correct deficiencies identified in the Commission's initial review. These fees will ensure the recovery of costs for the additional work caused by the submitter's oversight and would likely result in fewer re-submissions; and • continue to pursue night safety checks, surprise propane refill station inspections, and inspections of gas stations on an overtime basis. We also urge the commission to evaluate the feasibility of employees working staggered shifts so that they are available nights and week future the Commission should prepare cost/benefit analysis to support requests to the administration for overtime authorization. It may be in the interest of public safety that some inspections be performed regardless of cost; however, the costs should be closely monitored. 	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a fee for nearly all of the services that the Fire Marshal's Office performs, authorized and listed in Art 22 of Nassau County Fire Prevention Ordinance, including permits, certificates, licenses, and approvals. <p>Most fees increased by 10% by Legislature on 12/6/04. These fees went into effect 2/1/05.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Fire Marshal's office agrees with this recommendation and has begun the process suggested by the Comptroller. The new fee went into effect on 2/1/05. • To ensure the safety of the public, the Fire Marshal's Office will continue to pursue the inspections and checks referred to are performed on overtime where necessary. The Fire Marshal's Office agrees that these inspections and checks must be performed regularly, but will nevertheless monitor the overtime costs associated with these services.
2	The department should request the County Attorney's opinion as to whether and how the department can impose fees on other municipalities for services the department provides to them, including whether legislative authorization is required.	Auditors Follow-Up Response	Fees produced by such legislation would be minimal and such legislation would cause other municipalities to pursue charging fees to County departments
3	<p>The Commission should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review other municipalities' procedures for recovering the costs of the mitigation of hazardous materials incidents; • begin to bill responsible parties for clean-up costs; and • investigate whether the costs associated with responding to and investigating spills may be recovered even when containment or clean up services are not performed. 	2	We will check with other agencies and review any procedures we discover for recovering costs associated with haz mat spills. We should have sufficient information to make a determination by 5/1/05.
4	The Division supervisor stated that, the majority of the time, the Haz Mat team is requested to respond to scenes by the local fire departments (mostly for commercial responses); therefore, "the public" (or the spiller) does not make a majority of the calls. As recommended in the report, the Department should recover its labor costs as well as the cost of unreplaced materials not currently being billed.	Auditor's Follow-Up Response	As previously stated, we will examine this recommendation. We should have sufficient information to make a determination 5/1/05.
5	The log sheets should be completed in a more detailed manner, including, for each activity, the time started, time ended and the total time spent on each activity. The supervisor should sign the log sheets and verify that they are properly maintained. Downtime could be used to perform inspections or assist other divisions to reduce backlogs.	3	We use a computerized logbook and each employee logs their daily activities. We will review the Haz Mat logs and ensure that training entries are made in the logs. Haz Mat log entries are presently reviewed by Supervisors for content and accuracies
6	The Commission should review the necessity of staffing Haz-Mat 24-hours a day. This can be accomplished by charting the times when incidents occurred over a period of time to determine if there is a pattern. If a pattern exists where there is a lack of incidents, especially in the overnight hours, the Commission should determine if it would be cost effective to have inspectors on standby and call them in on overtime without increasing the risk of environmental contamination. If the Commission determines that the division does not need to be staffed 24 hours a day, inspectors should be redeployed to other divisions. If the analysis of the Haz-Mat incidents shows that 24-hour per day staffing is required, then the division employees should use down time to perform services for other divisions to reduce backlogs.	3	The Haz Mat team was developed to immediately respond to incidents. There is no pattern or predictability to Haz Mat incidents, therefore it is necessary to staff 24 hours.
7	At the time of the audit there were no reports available to establish a pattern for Haz Mat incidents and the divisional supervisor stated that night shifts have more downtime, particularly on weekends. To staff Haz-Mat effectively, we recommend that the department prepare monthly reports of Haz-Mat incidents by day, date and time. (For example, 8AM-4PM, 4PM to Midnight and Midnight to 8AM, weekdays and weekends) to identify whether incident patterns exist and consider adjusting staffing schedules accordingly.	Auditor's Follow-Up Response	As previously stated there is no pattern or predictability to haz mat incidents. When a haz mat incident occurs, response time is a critical factor in resolving the incident. We do not staff Haz Mat based on an expected number of incidents. The duty haz mat team performs duties for other divisions, however, these duties must be able to be terminated if the team needs to respond to a haz mat incident.

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8	<p>The Commission should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●review with the Legislature the necessity of having fire inspectors present at legislative meetings; ●have clerical personnel complete FOIL requests and then forward them to the supervisor for review before they are issued to the requesting party; ●investigate whether the county's Printing and Graphics department can provide mailing services or, alternatively, contract out the mailing of permit renewals to free up inspectors to perform job duties commensurate with their job titles; ●determine if it is beneficial to use the county's Information Technology Department instead of fire inspectors to perform information technology functions; ●determine whether messengers could be assigned to pick-up and deliver vehicles for fire inspectors, and; ●use clerical personnel to make entries into the Fee Collection System. 	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●We respond to Legislative sessions based on a standing request from the Legislature. We now staff the assignment with 1 Inspector unless the Legislature requests further coverage. ● It is important for the Inspector who has the case to review the file before a foil is answered, because not all files/information are subject to foil. Clerical personnel log in all foil requests. ●With an increase in clerical staff, this office will handle permit renewals more efficiently. ●We will examine this recommendation with IT. We are presently working with IT to work together on IT issues. ●We only have one messenger on staff. ●Most entries into the Fee Collection system are done by clerical personnel.
9	The department should determine its long term clerical needs, giving consideration to the expected impact of the new fee collection system. The department should then be staffed to minimize the need for Fire Inspectors to perform clerical duties.		We have requested to increase clerical staff.
10	<p>A master schedule should be established and updated monthly that lists all inspections, plan reviews and emergency lighting tests performed by the divisions. The schedule would aid the supervisors in monitoring the progress and productivity of each inspector. The inspectors should be provided with individualized schedules and should be required to update the schedule on a timely basis to indicate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -planned and complaint-based inspections completed; -facilities inspected; -plan reviews completed; -actual labor-hours used to complete the inspections/reviews; -facilities not inspected as scheduled, and emergency lighting tests not performed, along with explanations as to why they were not inspected or performed, and rescheduling date. 	5	The progress and productivity of each Inspector can be monitored by the electronic log book. Our schedules need to be more fluid than the recommended master schedule would allow, for example, accelerated plan reviews are conducted when requested and would create constant changes to a master schedule.
11	The Commission should use the Fee Collection System to provide updated test inspection reports and provide management with progress reports. The system should be maintained on an up-to-date basis so the reports generated contain useful information.	5	The system as it exists does not have these capabilities. We will reexamine this recommendation when County IT provides a system capable of such reports.
12	Emergency light tests should be scheduled and completed within a reasonable amount of time.	5	We have increased the number of emergency lighting tests and the tests are completed as scheduled.
13	<p>The Commission should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Consider hiring clerical personnel to perform the clerical duties currently being performed by fire inspectors; ●evaluate the feasibility of redeploying under-utilized personnel to address backlogs in recording false alarms. (The Police Department, for example, uses school crossing guards to assist with routine clerical duties at their commands); ●consider assigning clerks from the Haz-Mat division during any down-time to enter false fire alarm data. 	6	<p>As previously stated, we have requested additional clerical personnel.</p> <p>Our staff is utilized properly. The comparison of Police Department Crossing Guards assisting in clerical duties is unfair, as Crossing Guards are used for clerical duties when their primary assignments do not fulfill their hours requirement.</p> <p>There are no clerks in Haz Mat division.</p>
14	After a new computer system is implemented, the department should determine whether the technology eliminates or reduces its needs for additional, permanent clerical personnel. In any case, at that time, fire inspectors should be reassigned from clerical to fire inspection-related duties.	Auditor's Follow-Up Response	We agreed with the audit finding that a new computer system would improve our operation and this department will adjust assignments and personnel when a new system provides new efficiencies.
15	The Commission should request the DA's Office to provide a monthly list of the adjudicated appearance tickets, along with the final disposition and the amount of fines imposed and collected.	7	This recommendation has been implemented.
16	The Commission should pre-number the Orders to Remove Violations using a system that ensures the orders can be accounted for and tracked to each division. A computerized schedule should be maintained that lists all orders issued, including the number of the order, the location (facility) to which it was, and the nature of the violation. A supervisor should ensure that follow-up inspections are performed so that all violations are corrected. Pertinent information including the date of the re-inspection, inspector's name, and resolution of the order should be recorded on the schedule.	7	A new computer system will enable us to produce a computerized schedule, however, Supervisors are presently ensuring followup inspections of violations.

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17	The installation of a new system should be a priority. The new system should enhance the division supervisor's ability to monitor and report on the activities of each division and inspector, including backlogs of inspection and plan reviews. The system specifications should address the weaknesses cited in the finding.	8	We agree.
18	As an interim measure, the Commission should establish procedures to ensure that all permits for active alarm systems are renewed and that late charges are collected when renewal fees are not paid in a timely fashion. Penalty fees should be included in the follow up billings to those permittees who have not paid within the prescribed time.	8	We presently collect late fees. A new computer system would improve our collection efforts.
19	The Commission should consider proposing legislation making alarm companies responsible for ensuring that their clients have up-to-date permits, and allowing the Commission to accept payments from the companies on behalf of clients for alarm registrations and permit renewals. The alarm companies should also be required to submit a quarterly list of all systems they monitor within the county, showing additions and deletions, to enable the Commission to update its records and verify that permits are current.	9	We presently accept alarm company checks on behalf of their clients. We will request the County Attorney to examine the recommendation of proposed legislation. When we get an answer from the County Attorney we will explore our options.
20	The Commission should establish procedures that comply with Control Directives issued by the Comptroller. These procedures should limit the number of employees who make entries to applicant accounts and ensure that applicant accounts are reduced whenever a fee based service is performed.	10	We do limit the employees who enter funds into our system. We will examine our controls and establish appropriate procedures to comply with directives issued by the Controller, by July 1, 2005.
21	Applicant accounts should be reviewed periodically to ascertain whether the funds should be returned to the applicant, and that the balances on account have been reduced for the services performed. To facilitate this review, the Commission should utilize the Fee Collection System to generate periodic reports of balances on account that are outstanding for more than a predetermined amount of time. If the Commission is unable to return the outstanding amounts to applicants, the county should forward the unclaimed funds to the state.	10	We recognize the limitations of the present fee collection system and will reexamine this recommendation when a new computer system is installed.
22	The Commission, in conjunction with the Department of Information Technology, should develop a web site to: a. provide essential information, including the Nassau County Fire Prevention Ordinance; b. permit cash payments and transaction processing; and, c. enable the public to file applications online.	11	This office is working with IT to implement this recommendation. There have been several meetings between our staff and IT representatives to develop a website and implement the County's E Government initiatives for our organization. We will have a site up and running as soon as IT can complete their work on the site.
23	The Commission should review the Comptroller's Control Directive No. 3: Cash Receipts, issued June 24, 2004, which require two or more designated employee's to open the mail and prepare a log of the day's receipts. The cashier should verify that the total receipts listed agree to the cash receipts recorded and deposited for that day.	12	We will review Control Directive 3 and determine how we will comply with the directive utilizing our current staff. We should have sufficient information by June 1, 2005.
24	To ensure that Commission employees are not paid concurrently by both the county and VEEB, VEEB should submit time sheets with its reimbursement claims for those employees who are also employed by the Commission. The Commission should compare VEEB's time sheets to the employee's Nassau County time sheet for duplication of hours prior to approving the VEEB claims for payment.	13	We will implement internal controls to ensure that employee work hours are verified. Presently, Supervisors review and sign the time sheets of subordinates assigned to their Divisions. I will meet with my supervisors to discuss this issue and establish a policy by June 1, 2005.
25	The Commission should ensure that it complies with county time and leave authorization and recording procedures.	14	This office complies with county time and leave procedures.